

Top Secret

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Wednesday April 6, 1977 CG NIDC 77-079C



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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION
Unauthorized Disclosure Subject to Criminal Sanctions



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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Wednesday, April 6, 1977.

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[REDACTED] The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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LEBANON: Situation Report

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[redacted] Heavy fighting continued yesterday between Palestinian-leftist forces and the Christians in southern Lebanon. The Palestinians and leftists assert that they have repelled a Christian attempt to retake Tayyibah. Both sides were reported to be still fighting in the Marj Uyun area.

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[redacted] //The Israelis assert, however, that the movement of armed Palestinians from the camps near Beirut to the south as well as the movement of weapons and ammunition from Sidon to Nabatiyah could not have been accomplished without Syrian agreement. The Israelis believe that Syria's decision to support the Palestinians and the leftists was made on Thursday at a meeting between Syrian President Asad and Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat in Damascus.//

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[redacted] The Syrian support for the Palestinians appears to some degree to be intended to persuade extreme rightist leader Camille Shamun that he cannot oppose Syrian policies in Lebanon with impunity. Most of the Christians fighting in southern Lebanon are supporters of Shamun, who has strongly pushed the Christian effort to extend their control along the border with Israel.

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[redacted] Shamun had unsuccessfully opposed the replacement last week by President Sarkis of Hanna Said as army commander, a move supported by Syria. The Syrians may have regarded the latest Christian offensive as an attempt by the extremists to carry out a threat to establish a Christian enclave in the south if Said were dismissed.

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[redacted] Even if the Syrians have provided artillery support for the Palestinians and leftists, so long as they do not move south, no major reaction is likely from the Israelis. The Israelis themselves have been providing artillery and logistic

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support to the Christians. The Israelis will carefully monitor Syrian activity, and any indication of more extensive Syrian support to the Palestinians and leftists is certain to draw an Israeli warning.

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ZAIRE: Situation Report

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The invasion of Zaire's Shaba Region continues to move slowly. The former Katangan gendarmes have apparently been consolidating their positions west of Kolwezi for over a week, giving the Zairian military time to attempt to reorganize, refit, and motivate its forces.

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The invasion began almost a month ago, and the Katangans have yet to reach Kolwezi. The Katangans have probably been held up to some degree by the heavy rains but appear to be adhering to the cautious style of advance favored by the Popular Movement forces during the Angolan civil war. The mines in the Kolwezi area produce 70 percent of Zaire's copper output.

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The Zairian military is trying to put together a more organized force. Abler officers have been put in command, improved logistic support is being arranged, and improved defensive arrangements are being planned. Some of the command changes have provoked factionalism in the army headquarters, however, and the troops have been deserting at alarming rates. Given another week or two, the Zairians could come up with a creditable defense. On balance, however, we are doubtful that the Zairian military can stop the Katangans.

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[redacted] French and Belgian advisers are playing a larger role in Zaire. The French have set up a radio network of their own in Shaba, and a group of French advisers is waiting in Kinshasa with arms and ammunition for Zaire's Alouette helicopters. The Belgians are working with the Zairian air force. The ambassadors of the two countries flew to Kolwezi yesterday, presumably to look the situation over more closely. Neither country apparently has made any new commitments for arms supply.

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[redacted] The Nigerian effort at mediation is continuing. The foreign minister visited Kinshasa and Luanda last week, and an Angolan delegation was to arrive in Lagos yesterday. The Nigerians tend to sympathize with Angola's view that Zaire has long been fostering Angolan insurgent groups and believe that the best solution would be to close the border between the two countries while getting both to cease supporting each other's opposition groups. The Nigerians believe the mediation effort will be a lengthy affair; the Katangans could take all of Shaba before an agreement is reached.

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[redacted] Zaire has broken diplomatic relations with Cuba because of its view of Cuban complicity in the Katangan invasion. Relations between Zaire and the USSR have now apparently cooled again.

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[redacted] USSR: Brezhnev on US-USSR Relations

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[redacted] At a dinner for Cuban President Castro yesterday, General Secretary Brezhnev made his first public remarks on US-Soviet relations since Secretary Vance's visit last week.

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Brezhnev's language was consistent with Soviet public and private efforts to demonstrate that no major change in policy had been intended in Foreign Minister Gromyko's remarks at a press conference last week.

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[redacted] While Brezhnev asserted that the US is losing its constructive approach and has offered only a "one-sided position," he noted the continued existence of "a rather good basis" for practical steps in strategic arms control. He spoke of the need for a reasonable accommodation based on mutually acceptable solutions.

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[redacted] Senior political commentator Aleksandr Bovin wrote in *Izvestia* last Saturday that the Soviets had been forced to reject the entire US package because a part of it was unacceptable. He thus implied that the US proposal does contain elements that may be acceptable to the USSR. The Soviet media have not yet picked up Gromyko's threat to resurrect the issue of US forward-based systems on the Soviet periphery.

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[redacted] The bulk of Brezhnev's text was devoted to defending Soviet and Cuban policies in the third world. Brezhnev decried the "absurd concoctions" being spread about Soviet and Cuban intentions, arguing that third world states turn to the USSR and other communist countries because of Soviet support in resisting "imperialist" aggression.

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[redacted] Brezhnev noted that Castro's travels in Africa had been followed with much interest and implied that they had complemented the efforts of President Podgorny, who returned to Moscow the day Castro arrived. Brezhnev's call for "better and more effective" Soviet-Cuban cooperation, however, suggests that not all of Castro's activities in Africa were cleared with Moscow in advance.

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[redacted] Politburo member Suslov, the Soviets' senior ideologist, was on hand for the Castro dinner, marking his first public appearance in six weeks and only his second this year.

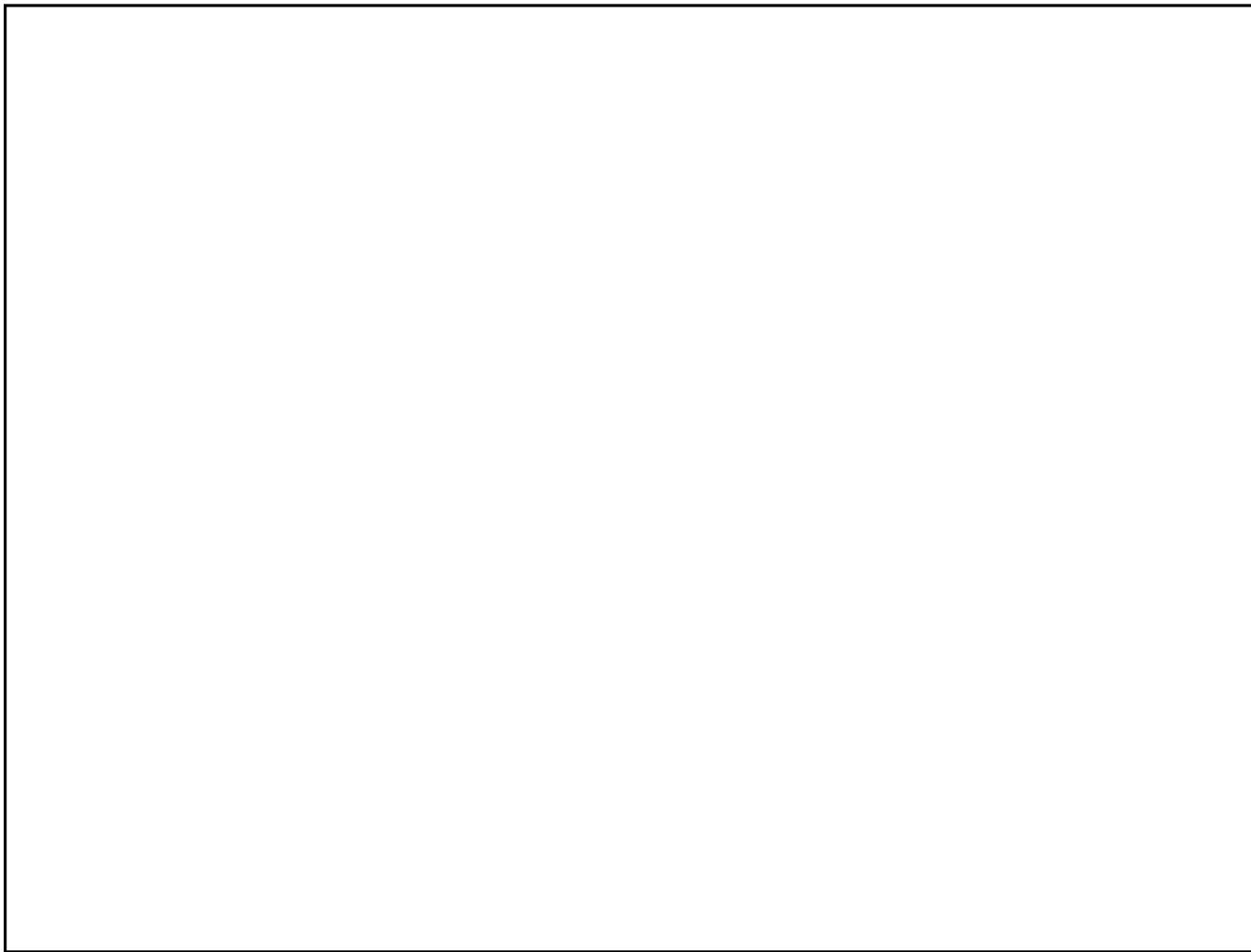
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INTERNATIONAL: Nonaligned Meeting

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[redacted] The Nonaligned Coordinating Committee begins a six-day meeting today in New Delhi to discuss international political and economic problems. Representatives--most of them foreign ministers--from 25 nations will participate; many other countries will have observers there.

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[redacted] Contentious issues such as Korea, the Near East, Puerto Rico, and southern Africa could surface during the discussions. Those attending the meeting do not expect any major

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departures from past nonaligned positions. The host country can exercise considerable influence over the course of such meetings and the Indians appear likely to try to prevent initiatives on issues such as Puerto Rico and Korea.

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[redacted] Discussions of the international economic situation are likely to reflect a feeling that developing countries are falling farther behind and that developed countries have an obligation to help them, particularly after the lack of progress at the recently concluded UNCTAD talks on the common fund. Specific economic plans probably will not be developed. [redacted]

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VIETNAM: Oil Exploration

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[redacted] //Vietnam reportedly reached preliminary agreements last month with the state-controlled oil companies of Italy and France, bringing Hanoi a step closer to resuming exploration of its offshore oil holdings on the southern continental shelf.//

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[redacted] These agreements mark the first firm progress on offshore oil exploration since the fall of Saigon in 1975. Prior to that time, drilling by US firms had showed the possibility of commercial-sized deposits.

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[redacted] Hanoi has declared all contracts with the former Saigon government to be void. The European companies, however, could face legal complications if they drill in concessions previously awarded to US companies. US firms are prohibited by US law from commercial dealings with the Vietnamese.

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[redacted] //The Italians, according to sketchy details, may invest \$24 million over four years in a promising area formerly explored by a Shell - Cities Service venture. If commercial production starts, the Italian company will recover its costs, be paid a service fee based on production levels, and have an option to buy a share of the output.//

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[redacted] //The French arrangement involves exploration in or near a former Mobil-Kaiyo concession that also showed some signs of oil. French companies had held a 19-percent financial interest in that concession. The French hope to have a firm contract in 3 to 4 months and would like to begin exploratory drilling early next year.//

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[REDACTED] The Vietnamese still want US technology and capital for their drilling program. The steps taken with the European firms may mean that the Vietnamese feel they can delay no longer in exploiting potentially valuable oil resources. Hanoi also may feel that these steps will bring pressure on the US to resume commercial relations with Vietnam.

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